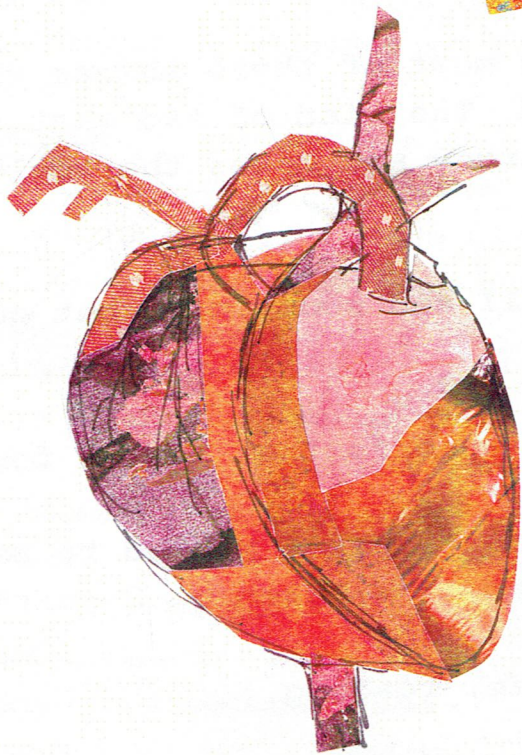


Heart



PULP

I wrote most of these things when I was sad. The kind of sad that sits in your marrow and makes the world feel heavy.

I'm still sad sometimes, but not like I was.

This is an effort at moving forward.

These are things I wanted to tell you then, and it's taken me 2 years.

Thanks for reading.

-M

Sent To The Whales.

I fired this love letter from a cannon, in hopes that it would sink into the sea. Swallowed by the arms of a mother that can roll over my skin and keep me from sinking. I tied it to a cannon ball and sent it to the whales. It did not say much; just a few things I thought you should know.

Dirty Water in Teacups.

I thought that if I opened my windows and pried the shingles off of my roof, then the first spring rain would wash the sadness from my walls. But now there are just puddles in my shoes and I am stuck drinking dirty water out of teacups.

So I sit and I stare at you and I feel altogether terrible because I lost my keys and had to sleep on the couch the first time we hung out and I broke that goofy cup when I was doing the dishes on the third time we hung out. But that haircut I gave you looks pretty good.

Untitled and Aching.

But, when I close my eyes, I can't picture your face anymore. And, when I lost the key to your apartment, you never gave me another one. And I don't do laundry at your place anymore.

I don't wake up to a message about having a good day. You don't either, though, to be fair.

Most of the time I miss you like how you miss the summer in the dead of winter. Like when you forget what it feels like to have the sun on your shoulders and you just get used to the cold. And you get a glimpse of the sun once in a while but it just seems so far away. You can't make the seasons turn.

Love Stories about Strangers.

I wanted to settle in there and make my home between the guitars and piano keys; under the deep gold and crimson hues. In between the drum heads and harmonicas. Fall in to something comfortable for a while.

I wanted to collect dust on a bookshelf in the corner for a few decades, keep record of people being people in all of their subtle and mundane ways. Be rediscovered one day by a casual passerby and whisper to them intimate secrets about strangers living in their city.

Do not move, I thought, do not even breath and they will not know you're here.

They will scratch their noses, rub their eyes, sing along softly, shift their weight, tie their shoes, adjust their outfits. But they will never see me and for just a moment they will be wholly and completely themselves and only I will know what that looks like. I will know them at their most vulnerable and human. And I will probably fall in love with each and every one of them. I

will fill my pages with love stories that will never really happen; about the little intimacies and the every day occurrence, and knowing these strangers in ways that most others never will.

I wanted to find a home in a place where I can love them, but keep its dull ache to myself.

I Have Been Writing You Paper Animals.

I have been writing you **letters**. Letters that I will **probably** never send; letters about **pirate**

ships and **peace treaties** and how I do my best thinking **alone** on a dark street at 4 in the **morning**. Or when I am **waiting in line** at the supermarket and have no pen. Which is why my letters are never any good. **Letters** that are sitting on my desk and in between pages in **empty notebooks** and **under my bed**. Mostly unfinished.

Scratched out, drawn over, folded into little paper animals that keep me company when I am **sad**.

I am **afraid**, now, to send them; because we are no longer **kids**. And I am **afraid** you will not **understand**. Not like when I would look at the **floor** you would **nod**, always **knowing**, and tell the kids in school to "Shut up because you don't even know what you're talking about." And you would **cry** because you did not **understand** either.

Afraid because **so much** about me has **changed** and you might not **recognize**, much less **like**, the person who **wrote** those letters.

And **afraid** because I **miss** you and I am **falling apart** but you cannot know that because I **always** have to be strong; you know no other person.

So instead I **call** you and **hide** it in my voice and **tell** you that I hope everything is **alright** and that I **love you**. We will see one another soon, do not worry! But we both know that it has been a **year** and "**soon**" is another word for "the next time we are both in the same **city**" which is a nice way of **pretending** that we will see one another just to make the **pain** of missing someone a little **less**.

I have been writing you **letters**; every single day. And my room is **overflowing** with **stupidly** folded pieces of paper and **heart ache**.

Blue and Grey.

We were laying in your bed. It was cold out; winter had been hard for both of us.

Someone once told me that two bodies can keep warmest when pressed together while naked; I had never understood that quite as well as I did then. This was before everything except the butterflies; they moved in early this spring, apparently...

I told you how afraid I was and you told me it was ok; that things were better like this. They were. But you said you worried too.

I could not look you in the eyes, just trace your collar bones with my chilled fingers and breath into your neck. You asked me what I was thinking. "I don't know... I have a tendency to break my own heart." I sighed and rolled over feeling more hopeless than ever.

You let out a brief laugh-like breath but rolled over and pulled me closer nonetheless.

It was cold out; winter had been hard for both of us. When I think of you now, I am reminded of that warmth. But, then again, I have a tendency to break my own heart.

Strange.

Stolen internet and expired phone cards are never enough to reach you, anymore. Even the last of the sweet summer rain would not budge the current enough to take me to where you are.

Though, I still remember the way folds of cotton rustled 'neath open windows and we stretched, bare, like porcelain statues awaken from slumber. Cool breeze on heat-flushed cheeks. Moments between floodlights on grey walls from strangers pulling up the drive; revealing eye lashes and warm, soft lips on flesh.

No matter how connected a moment may make us seem, time is an ebb and flow that may bring disconnect. I have lost you somewhere to the things scratching at the door when it is darkest out and the sounds of the faucet dripping in the next room. To the marquee downtown by the statehouse at night with wind in my hair. To sweat. To a radio. To a closed fucking mouth and a bed slept in on one side.

And like a wrecking ball, my heart smashed against the inside of my chest until I was certain it had shattered every rib and battered my lungs limp.

Hand Dryers and Bus Stops and Strangers.

I was walking around in the rain, my umbrella's head hung, dragging itself behind me.

I thought about soggy shoes and hand dryers and bus stops and strangers.

I would have shared my umbrella with you again, but your brown eyes are lost out in the sea of lashes in the big city and I would not even know where to look for them now. You are probably warm and dry and your shoes are probably not filled with puddles and you are most likely not drying your skirt with a hand dryer or sharing your umbrella with strangers at bus stops.

Disjointed Connections.

I ended up at that bench again.

Four a.m. and wandering around a sleeping city. With memories of rain dampened hair and timid looks and shaking knees. The calmness; your steady breath and earnest laugh.

I am thinking about curtains in the breeze and the way the spring smells as it lingers on your shoulder. I am thinking about skin and bones; the dilating of pupils in the dark. I am thinking about open windows and bicycle rides in the summer.

Heavy eyes and a lightness of being. Like a thin layer peeled back; nerves exposed in the cool morning air.

Moss covered benches and birds singing and a warm nest to fall into.

You'll Be You Again One Day.

I have rested my eyes on white walls, my bones on white paper sheets and stiff, sterile exam tables. I have gazed out fogged windows upon birds on wires and cloudy skies. Sat, trying to articulate myself while being mentally examined to the point of exhaustion. Rigid; on hard, cold plastic chairs. Tense; sinking into over-stuffed bean bag chairs that are only there as an effort toward feigned comfort. I have lent my erratic, obsessive thoughts to those who wanted only to pick them apart and try to tape them back together in a more organized fashion; to no avail. I have ruined family dinners and I have spent my parents' tears. On things I knew would never fix me. I have planned sabotage upon sabotage of the things I thought would ruin me for life. I've seen needle after needle enter veins; blood in vials; urine in cups. Given myself away to strangers who told my mother it would bring me back to reality. I have

spent afternoons shivering on carpet floors dissecting feelings and compensatory behaviors. Feeling like I failed. Feeling like I wanted to sink into the cool, bare walls. Like I wanted to die. Like I deserved nothing but death. Or maybe I deserved the suffering of the life I was leading. The feelings that I had ruined everything my parents had tried so hard to give me. That they hated me; with good reason. That everyone should hate me. I never understood why they didn't. I never wanted to be seen. I never wanted to be touched.

But never once have I blamed it on anyone but myself.

We Shed Our Skin.

And so they headed to the water. In their soiled summer clothes and their sun-soaked melon cheeks. Perhaps it was that unassailable feeling of childhood, that ephemeral euphoria that the day had bestowed. I went along because I was afraid of being alone in that empty field with my expectations. I went along because it was hot and sticky and unbearable not to. As we ran and tumbled down the rocks like eager ducklings ready to swim, our articles were all left behind somewhere and forgotten. The main goal was water on flesh and anything inhibiting that goal was considered incidental. Hands made unspoken connections, Lips met sporadically and the unadulterated rush of feeling that we all acquired was fleeting in a physical sense, but would last forever somewhere in our fiery hearts. We had found the inherent truth in being human. In wanting only one thing at any one given time and striving for it. In feeling instinctually that this was where we belonged at this very moment. And so they jumped. Into the flowing stream and laughed and splashed and knew they wanted nothing else even if just for that moment in time. We were bare. Of not only our physical boundaries, but our mental and emotional inhibitions too. When we got out and dried off, it would all be over because time would not wait for our games to end. We would become people of society again. I knew this, but still I jumped. I jumped because there was nothing holding me back. I jumped because life was just so predictable sometimes. I jumped because if I didn't jump, I never would.

